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## **3<sup>rd</sup> Training of Coaches Held**

The third training of English language arts and mathematics instructional coaches from comprehensive schools occurred on December 11. The focus of the day-long workshop was *The Coaching Cycle* – with lots of time to practice with other coaches and learning from their sharing of challenges and successes!

### **The Coach's Role: *Classroom Supporter***

At the September training session, we learned of the ten roles of instructional coaches. In October, we focused on one of the ten roles: *the data coach*. During this time, the coaches practiced disaggregating data, especially Acuity and Wireless Generation data, and discovered ways to hold data discussions and develop data walls or rooms. This month the training centered upon a second role of the coach: *classroom supporter*.

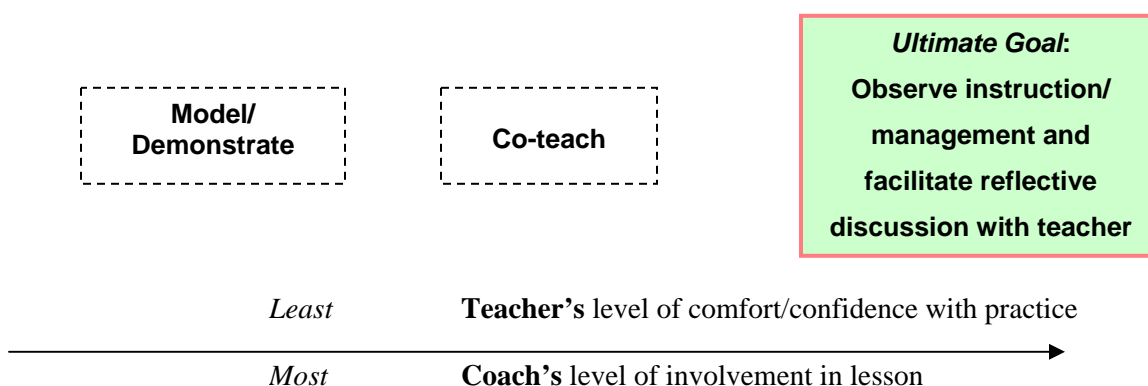
What is a *classroom supporter*? The coach should be spending the majority of time in the classroom assisting teachers to improve their instructional practices and classroom management skills – fulfilling the role of classroom supporter. In fact, for Indiana's Differentiated Accountability Model, **principals** need to ensure that coaches spent the vast majority of their time with teachers in their classrooms.

As a classroom supporter, the coach serves one of three functions:

- *Models or demonstrates* an instructional practice including classroom management strategies.
- *Co-teaches* a lesson with the classroom teacher.
- *Observes* the teacher and *facilitates* feedback discussion.

The function served by the coach depends on the results of the pre-observation conference ("Planning Conversation") with the teacher. Depending on the teacher's request, the coach may complete any of the three functions. The functions exist along a continuum and correspond to the comfort level of the teacher in using a specific instructional practice. However, the ultimate goal is for the coach to move from modeling or co-teaching to observing the teacher and facilitating a reflective discussion afterwards. In their book "Taking the lead: New roles for teachers and school-based coaches" (2006), Killion and Harrison provide a visual of the continuum of the functions of the coach as *classroom supporter* (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. Killion and Harrison's: *Continuum of Classroom Supporter* (p. 53)**



The coach does not necessarily complete all three functions of classroom supporter for a particular teacher or practice. Some teachers will be ready to be observed; others may feel moderately comfortable with a practice and ask for the coach to co-teach it with them. The results of the Planning Conversation will determine which classroom supporter function is most appropriate at that time for that lesson. The use of the Planning Conversation as the first step of the Collaborative Coaching Cycle is critical to the successfulness of the modeling, co-teaching or observing.

## The Collaborative Coaching Cycle - A short review

A second focus of the December training was to review the Collaborative Coaching Cycle<sup>1</sup> and to practice using it with the other coaches. The coaches realized that no matter which function of classroom supporter they utilized it was critical to implement the coaching cycle as it:

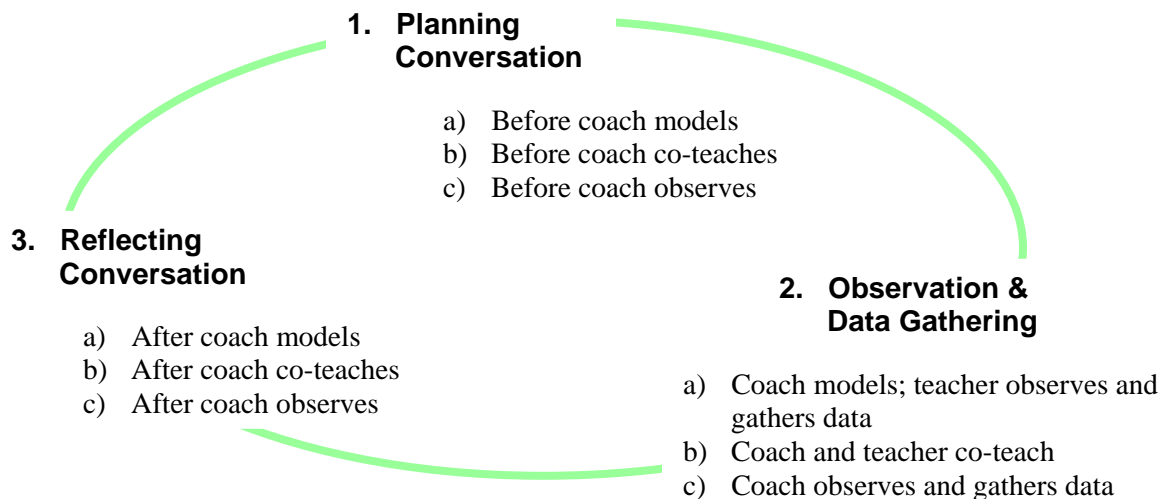


- Develops the teacher's reflective skills in determining their own comfort level with a practice.
- Provides clarity and agreement as to the coach's role.
- Allows for the development of an observation instrument to provide "facts" about the lesson.
- Provides a process that requires participation and reflection of the teacher to continue to develop problem-solving and critical thinking skills to meet the needs of all learners.

In sharing their most recent experiences with the Coaching Cycle, several coaches commented as to the difficulty of helping teachers realize the importance of the post-observation discussion ("Reflecting Conversation"). **Principals**, please assist your coach by informing the staff that everyone needs to participate in all three phases of the coaching process. Teachers need to be available to meet with the coach both before and after the model, co-teaching or observation.

Remember the Collaborative Coaching Cycle is critical in all three functions of the coach as classroom supporter (Figure 2).

**Figure 2: Collaborative Coaching Cycle as Part of the Classroom Supporter Functions**



## **Terrific Tips from Coaches!**

A highlight of the day was the opening activity of coaches sharing their challenges and their *solutions* for overcoming those challenges. A sample of challenges instructional coaches face include:

- Getting teachers to trust me – to not view me as evaluating their performance.
- Convincing teachers it is important to have planning and reflective time together.
- Persuading the principal that my role is to “coach”- not other duties as assigned.
- Finding time and finding time and finding time! – to meet with teachers, to serve all teachers.

In listening to one another’s struggles, coaches provided great support and ideas to each other. Here are their solutions that work!

### **➤ Getting Teachers to Participate**

**Principal’s Tip:** Explain to staff – more than once – the role of the coach and the involvement of all *to improve student achievement*.

**Tip:** The longer one waits to get into the classroom the more difficult it will be.

**Tip:** Stay focused: The purpose of coach is to provide tools for teachers to use in instructing their students.

**Tip:** All new teachers to the district are contractually required to participate in the Coaching Cycle with the instructional coach.

**Tip:** Revisit the school improvement plan with the staff. Remind them of the student groups not meeting AYP according to the plan and the pre-determined research-based instructional practices to use with those students.

- Tip:* Gain commitment from all staff to implement the agreed-upon instructional practice. Together outline the steps or the protocol for the practice and ensure that all agree to implement the practice in the same manner.
- Tip:* Observe the above instructional practice and ensure that teachers receive professional development regarding the practice as needed.
- Tip:* Negotiate the modeling of a lesson or co-teaching with a promise from the teacher of completing the full coaching cycle with you in the near future. Don't get stuck planning or creating lessons for teachers as this takes the responsibility away from the teacher and does not require him/her to change classroom practices.



### **Working with Those who Resist Working with You**

***Principal's Tip:*** Explain to the full faculty – probably more than once – everyone will be working with the instructional coach and the role of the coach. Ensure them that the coach's visits to the classroom are confidential. The coach does not report to the principal about classroom observations.

***Principal's Tip:*** Adopt the motto, "Everybody needs a coach!" From Payton Manning to Oprah Winfrey to those who use a fitness coach to a principal who has a mentor – everyone needs a coach. Emphasize that "In this school, all of us will have a coach as all of us can improve on what we are doing."

- Tip:* Work with those teachers who are "ready" to work with you first. With time, they will "sell" your work to teachers who are more resistant.
- Tip:* Create an instruction, curriculum, and formative assessments school newsletter/website. Provide articles on agreements reached in teaching practices, expectations for teachers in using specific instruction/programs (e.g., Guided Reading), testing schedules, and instructional tips.
- Tip:* Verbally acknowledge teacher's expertise in knowing their students well. Honor what the person *does* know.
- Tip:* Role reversal: When modeling a lesson, be sure to conduct the Planning Conversation, reaching agreement on what the teacher will observe and co-develop a corresponding observation tool for the teacher to use.

### **➤ Finding Time**

- Principal's Tip:*** Cancel a faculty meeting and give that time to the instructional coach to meet with the staff.
- Tip:* Divide the teachers into three groups. Each trimester of the school year becomes the "intensive coaching time" for that group.
- Tip:* Be available in the teacher's lounge before school to conduct reflecting conversation.

*Thank you coaches for sharing your terrific tips!*

## Gathering Data in Observations

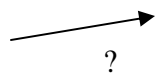
“What do I do when I am observing? How do I keep track of all that is going on in the classroom? What will I have to show the teacher after the observation?” We know that the answer to this depends on the results of the Planning Conversation: “What did the teacher determine were areas he/she wanted information regarding?” Once this question is answered, then the coach and teacher determine how that information might be recorded on paper for later examination. Our trainers, Sonia Caus Gleason and Susan Villani, provided the coaches with two examples of observational data gathering strategies: (a) Flow of conversation and (b) What was said.

### Data Gathering Strategy: Flow of Conversation

*Use:* To visually indicate who is having conversations with whom.

*Materials:* Seating chart

*Directions:* 1) Develop a set of symbols as a shortcut to indicate the conversations. Suggested symbols include:

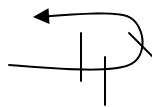


A line to indicate who is talking to whom.

?



Add a question mark above to indicate a question asked.



Curved lines for conversations back-and-forth with hash marks indicating number of interactions.

2) On a seating chart of the students, draw lines to indicate the interactions; be sure to indicate on the chart the position of the teacher in the room.

### Data Gathering Strategy: What was said?

*Use:* To collect quotations from the classroom

*Materials:* A watch with a secondhand

*Directions:* 1) In the Planning Conference, determine the types of quotations that the teacher wants recorded. Examples include: Questions teacher asks; Comments teacher makes to students when the answer is correct and when answer is incorrect; Questions students ask.  
2) Create a simple chart with two columns: one for the time, one for the comment.  
3) Enter the time and the comment, if the comments are occurring at a rapid pace, set a time, such as every 20 seconds, that you will record a comment.

### Reflecting Conversation: Sample Questions

For both data gathering strategies, similar questions might be asked during the Reflecting Conversation:

- What do you notice about the data?
- Are there patterns in the data?
- Based on the data, what might you want to continue or change with your practice?
- Is that what you remember happening?
- Are there surprises or “ah-has” in the data?

✓ **Zommerang – The Survey!**

Yes, be expecting to find a survey in your email box that asks about our next few sessions. We need to know your comfort level with the content of mathematics and English language arts. Do you want assistance in increasing your knowledge in these areas? *Please respond promptly so we can plan well to meet your needs!*

✓ **A New Coaches' Communication Log Template!**

We listened to your requests and now are field-testing with a few coaches a “new and improved” template. Mid-January, we will hear their feedback and then finalize the new template for all, to be rolled out during our next training session.

✓ **Videotaping for Some Coaches**

Thank you to those coaches who volunteered to be videotaped using the Collaborative Coaching Cycle. Please inform Lee Ann if you're unable to complete the assignment.

✓ **Next Session for Instructional Coaches**

- Tuesday, January 27 - The Fountains Banquet and Conference Center

*Looking forward to seeing you then!*

